

THE PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION BECOMES AFFILIATED WITH THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

FILE -

SG1E

Parapsychology is now a Recognized Science. How it was done.

Newark College of Engineering by E. Douglas Dean

CPYRGHT

In 1957 the British and in 1958 the American Medical Association voted to make hypnosis research a respectable field of science. Hypnosis has made great advances since then. For a decade and even longer the parapsychologists have yearned for their field to become legitimate; then they would not be made to feel loss of self-respect, or forced to lose their University positions if they contributed to gaining knowledge in parapsychology. So little is known definitively of human nature and personality and some scientists felt that a study of parapsychology could help our understanding so that they were willing to suffer censure and accusations of fraudulence from their colleagues, until such time as opinion changed. That time is starting here, now, in the U.S.A.

In 1957 the Parapsychological Association was formed with members from all over the world: this was a first step in creating professionalism in the parapsychological area. The Medical Associations are not the correct authorities from whom to seek recognition; rather this falls to the Associations for the Advancement of Science (AAAS in the U.S.A.). The AAAS has about 300 affiliated societies composed of all the scientific, medical and engineering societies in the U. S. The delegates, numbering about 500, make up the Council of the AAAS which votes Constitution changes and additions to society affiliations.

After the P.A. had been going the minimum five years in 1963, Dr. Carroll Nash, President, made the first attempt to affiliate with the AAAS but it was rejected. In 1966 Dean promised to try again and was elected P.A. President. His 1967 attempt passed the first hurdle which was recommendation by the AAAS Committee on Affiliation in November. It contained the statement that the Committee wished to encourage scientific research in parapsychology but not to say that ESP was thereby proven.

CPYRGHT

- 2 -

However the second hurdle is the Board of Directors of the AAAS on December 26, and here some VIP scientists considered it preposterous that parapsychology be regarded as scientific. So they did not put the affiliation of the P.A. to the third hurdle--the AAAS Council vote on December 30. A storm of controversy produced a motion by Council that the matter must be brought to a vote, yes or no, in 1968. The Council also abolished the AAAS Committee on Affiliations, officially and actually for other reasons. Things looked dark for the P.A.'s chances. Non-scientific people find this action of scientists very hard to understand. Yet in 1968, Sir Alistair Hardy, President of the S.P.R., and Fellow of the Royal Society (mainly a society of Nobel prize-winning scientists in England) stated that perhaps 12 of his 100 F.R.S. colleagues believed in ESP; 88 did not accept ESP's existence.

In 1968 Dean became Secretary of the P.A. and submitted another application, this time to the AAAS Committee on Council Affairs. The AAAS President, Dr. Walter Orr Roberts, was favorable to our cause and spoke for us on the committee. Yet he was overridden and the application was voted down at the first hurdle. Not only that but the criteria for affiliation were to be rewritten for future years, officially for other reasons. Things looked very dark for P.A. affiliation.

In 1969 Dean was elected to P.A. Council on a tie vote with Dr. John Beloff. Beloff lost on a toss-up. So Dean became Secretary of the P.A. again. He decided to lay low and not submit in 1969; this was in hope that by removing the pressure the criteria for affiliation would not be changed too adversely for 1970 when the new criteria were to be released. However Dr R. A. McConnell (Biophysics, Pittsburgh, and first P.A. President) told Dean that the criteria change was supposed to help the P.A. and that we should try again in 1969. This was a kind of reverse logic but Dean was only too willing, especially as McConnell knew Dr. A. Spillhaus, AAAS President-elect, and chairman of the first committee hurdle, was favorable to us. Dean's decision change was also reverse logic, since a letter came from the Washington AAAS office to say that even if we submitted in 1969 the committee would most probably table the application pending the new criteria due in 1970. Things looked very dark and rough for the P.A.

Nevertheless the P.A. Council backed up the decision to mount another application in 1969, the fourth. These applications are no easy matter.

CPYRGHT

- 3 -

They cost about \$150 each. To each of twelve scientists on the AAAS Committee is sent about 4½ pounds weight of materials. These are reprints of the best, most recent parapsychological research papers, copies of the P.A. Constitution and By-Laws, and articles in encyclopaedias. Thanks are due to P.A. members who sent in dozens of their valuable papers. Very hard-nosed decisions had to be made on which to include and which to leave out, as this in itself is a test of scientific acumen. Dr. McConnell was extraordinarily helpful here.

In addition, about 20 typewritten pages were included in answer to reasons why the P.A. wanted affiliation, whether the P.A. satisfied six procedural matters, and seven points concerning the criteria of affiliation. Results of a poll of P.A. members Dean conducted were included to show that about two-thirds of those replying were AAAS members and nine P.A. members were also AAAS Fellows. The membership list showed that two-thirds had a Ph.D. degree. A list of about 50 master's and Ph.D. theses at Universities around the world showed that degrees had been given (by some top-flight Universities) for research in parapsychology. Dr. R. Van de Castle (1970 P.A. President) was very helpful here. A list of recent notices of Symposia on Parapsychology, given at the New York Academy of Science, New York University, MIT, UCLA, A. Psychological Assn., A. Psychiatric Assn., and ASPR, was also presented.

The 20-pages were exquisitely typed and flawlessly Xeroxed with the Xerox repair man present to ensure it so. Then they were separated into transparent plastic folders. Dean had to disappear from life for three weeks to get this done each year. It is human to err, and on the 1969 one he was completing the packets with one hour to go before the Post Office closed; suddenly he realized he had Xeroxed the wrong article, leaving it out and submitting two of another. So he raced across town to the Xerox machine before it closed, and then to the Post Office with five minutes to spare to bargain for another hour which was granted to meet the deadline.

The application was considered by the first committee in the second half of November. Dean could not find out until mid-December that it had passed. The P.A. application was then on the agenda of the AAAS Council meeting sent to delegates as Item 7. But there was a mistake. Only four P. A. members were listed as AAAS Fellows, not nine. So Dean went up to the AAAS Annual Convention, held this year in Boston, and sought out Dr. Roberts just after he came off a TV show. He agreed to have the typing mistake

changed and gave the good news that the Board of Directors on December 26 had passed the P.A. application. So now there remained the vote of AAAS Council on December 30, when a strange event occurred on the 29th. Dean is a addict of Polynesian restaurants and goes in to admire the South Sea Island decor, hear the Hawaiian music, and order tea and fortune cookies. He must have eaten 300 such cookies over the years and read the fortunes. On the 29th, in the KONIKI, at 7 p.m., he was given the fortune "SUCCESS WILL COME TO YOU SOON." Did soon mean just 17 hours?

The AAAS Council meeting was held in the Statler-Hilton ballroom which was so vast that an Observer's Gallery was roped off at the back. Thus Dean could get a first-hand account of what happened. The Chairman should have been Dr. Spillhaus but he could not be present. Neither could Dr. Roberts, so it fell to the 1969 AAAS President, Dr. Bentley Glass. About 12 noon Dr. Glass brought up Item 7 on the agenda--the application of the American Orthopsychiatric Association and the Parapsychological Association for affiliation. Dr. Glass: "I will put each organization separately to a vote. The A. Orothopsychiatric Assn. do I hear a motion? Yes. Second? Yes. Any discussion? Silence. All those in favor of the motion say Aye? Aye. Against? Silence. The motion is passed by voice vote."

"Now the Parapsychological Association. Do I hear a motion? Silence. (Dean cringed, since he had tried to arrange a friend but could not and perhaps it was as well. The next ten seconds were interminable.) Then a soft voice spoke up and said 'Yes.' Dr. Glass: 'Is there a second? Silence.' (Again Dean nearly died. Do we lose it because there is no second to the motion?) But after five seconds someone said 'Yes.' 'Is there any discussion?' Several members tried to get to the microphones. A man whose name Dean could not hear said: "In our agenda it states that 'the aims of the P.A. are to advance parapsychology as a science, to disseminate knowledge of the field, and to integrate the findings with those of other branches of science.' The so-called phenomena of parapsychology do not exist and it is impossible to do scientific work in this area, so that we have a null science. I therefore will vote against this motion." A woman member said: "We are not familiar with what parapsychology is and so we are not qualified to make a vote on this association." (This was not quite correct, since Dr. McConnell had undertaken the huge task of mailing several items of literature describing parapsychology to all 530 delegates during the fall.)

CPYRGHT

- 5 -

Dr. Glass added: 'The Committee on Council Affairs considered the P.A.'s work for a very long time. The Committee came to the conclusion that it is an association investigating controversial or non-existent phenomena; however it is open in membership to critics and agnostics; and they were satisfied that it uses scientific methods of enquiry; thus that investigation can be regarded as scientific. Further information has come to us that the number of AAAS Fellows who are also members of the P.A. is not four as on the agenda but nine.' (Even the typing error was now working in our favor.) 'Is there any further discussion?'

Dr. Margaret Mead spoke: "For the last ten years we have been arguing about what constitutes science and scientific method and what societies use it. We even changed the By-laws about it. The P.A. uses statistics and blinds, placebos, double blinds and other standard scientific devices. (Then in a ringing statement.) The whole history of scientific advance is full of scientists investigating phenomena that the establishment did not believe were there. I submit that we vote in favor of this Association's work." Dr. Glass: 'The question of a vote is raised. Because of the controversial nature of this motion we should have a show of hands. Please raise your hands those Council members in favor of the motion?' (Approximately 160-180 hands gauged by the number of tables and average number of persons seated.) 'Those against?' (Approximately 30-35.) Dr. Glass: 'It seems that the motion is carried. If anyone desires a count of the hands, I will ask for the vote to be repeated? Silence. The motion is carried. Now to Item 8.

Dean was overcome with emotion and wept. He had got out of a bad of 'flu to go to Boston. It was due to those members who had published superlative research papers. Now however, many parapsychologists' positions in Universities would be strengthened. The P. A. membership would rise as many good scientists would be able to join now without forfeiting their jobs or their promotion. Money may be easier too. Advances would come in man's understanding of his mind. It was a kind of intellectual turning point as we entered the Seventies. We can rejoice for a time, for many of us have yearned for decades to be regarded as respectable scientists.

Yet we must not let it go to our heads, but hope for better research with more emphasis on a theory or model which will predict results. To keep our perspective may we remember a free translation of T. H. Huxley's dictum: Sit down before a little fact and ponder it humbly, and the smaller the fact, ponder it the longer and more humbly.